



Guiding *our* Actions



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Shaykh A. Nooruddeen Durkee
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أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتَلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظُلِمُوا ؕ

°udhina li-l-ladhīna yuqātalūna bi-°annahum ḍhulimū
Permission to fight back is granted to those being attacked.
For they have been oppressed!
(Sūrah al-Ḥajj 22:39)



إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِعَالًا سَتَمُنْهُمُ فِي شَيْءٍ
إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ تُرِيبُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ

°inna-l-ladhīna farraqū dīnahum wa kānū shīya°an
lasta minhum fī shay°in °innama °amruhum °ila-llahi
thumma yunabbi°uhum bimā kānū yaf°alūn
As for those who split up their religion and become sects,
you will not have anything to do with them.
Their matter rests only with Allah;
then He will inform them concerning what they used to do.
(Sūrah al-°An°ām 6:159)



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Shaykh A. Nooruddeen Durkee
Green Mountain School
313sand313@gmail.com
GreenMountainSchool.Org

بِسْمِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ ط

yāā ʾayyuha-l-ladhīna ʾamanū ʾaṭīʿu-llāha wa ʾaṭīʿu -r-rasūla
wa ʾūli-l-ʾamri minkum

Oh you who believe! Obey Allāh and obey the Messenger,
and those from among you who are invested with authority!

(Sūratu-n-Nisāa° 4:59)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ ط

لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ مَنْ ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ ط

إِلَى اللَّهِ مِنْ جَعَلَكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَتَبَيَّنْكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ط

yāā ʾayyuha-l-ladhīna ʾāmanū ʿalaykum ʾanfusakum;

lā yaḍurrukum man ḍalla ʾidhā ʾihtadaytum;

ʾila-llāhi marjiʿukum jamīʿan

fa-yunabbiʾukum bi-mā kuñtum taʿmalūn

‘O you who have come to believe!

You are responsible for your own souls

Those who have gone astray can cause you no harm

if you [yourselves] are guided.

You must [all] return to Allāh

and He will inform you [about] all you did.

(Sūratu-l-Māa°idah 5:105)

وَلَنْكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ ط

وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ط

wa-l-takun minkum ʾummatun yadʿūna ʾila-l-khayri

wa yaʾmurūna bi-l-maʿrūfi wa yanhawna ʿani-l-munkar;

wa ʾūlaʾika humu-l-mufliḥūn

“Let there arise from you a community inviting to all that is good,
enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong:

they are the ones to attain felicity”

Verily, I heard the Prophet ﷺ say,

“If the people see a wrongdoer and they do not take him by his hands, soon Allāh will inflict them all with a punishment from Him.”

[at-Tirmidhī, ʾAbu Dāwūd , ibn Mājah and Aḥmad]

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وَكَذَلِكَ أَخْذُ رَبِّكَ إِذَا أَخَذَ الْقُرَىٰ وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ ۖ إِنَّ أَخْذَهُ أَلِيمٌ شَدِيدٌ

wa kadhalika °akhḍhu rabbika °idhā °akhadha-l-qurā
wa hiya ḡhālimah; °inna °akhḡdhahu °alīmun ṣhādīdā

Such is the iron grip of your Lord when He seizes the cities
who oppress [the people]. His grip is painful, violent.
(Sūrah al-Hūd 11:102)

“yā °ibādiy °inni ḡarramtu-ḡh-ḡhulma °alā nafsiy wa ja°altuhu
baynakum muḡarraman, fa lā taḡhālamū.”

“Oh My worshippers, I have forbidden myself oppression
and I have made it forbidden between you,
so do not oppress one another.”

Muslim

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ ۚ
كَذَلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ
وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

hal yandḡhurūna °illa °an ta°tiyahumu-l-malāā°ikatu
aw ya°tiya amru rabbik?

kadhalika fa°ala-l-ladḡīna min qabālihīm;
wa mā ḡḡalamahumu-llāhu wa lakin kanū °aṇfusahum yaḡḡlimūn

What are they waiting for
but the angels to come to them or your Lord's command to come?
That is like what those before them did.

Allah did not oppress them; rather they oppressed themselves.
(Sūratu-n-Naḡl 16:33)

°Abū Saīd al-Kḡudrī narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said,

“Whoever of you sees an evil must change it with his hand. If he is
not able to do so, then [he must change it] with his tongue. And if
he is not able to do that, then [he must change it] with his heart. And
that is the slightest [effect of] faith.” (at-Tirmidḡī, Abu Dāwūd, al-
Nasāā°ī°, ibn Mājah and Muslim)

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°Ibn Mas°ūd narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, “There is no prophet that was sent to a nation before me except that he had helpers and companions. They would follow his way and implement his orders. After them came generations that would say what they did not do and do what they did not say. Whoever struggled against them with his hand is a believer. Whoever struggled against them with his tongue is a believer. And whoever struggled against them with his heart is a believer. Beyond that there is no faith, even equivalent to the amount of a mustard seed... [Muslim]

Allāh ﷻ says,

لُعِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ عَلَى لِسَانِ دَاوُودَ وَعِيسَى ابْنِ
مَرْيَمَ ؑ ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ • كَانُوا لَا يَتَنَاهَوْنَ عَنْ مُنْكَرٍ
فَعَلُوهُ ؑ لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ

lu°ina-l-ladhīna kafarū min banī °isrāā°ila °ala lisāni dāwūda wa
°isā °ibni maryama; dhalika bi-mā °aṣaw wa kānū ya°tadūn • kānū
lā yatanāhawna °an muñkarin fa-°alūh; labi°sa mā kānū yaf°alūn

Those of the Children of Israel who went astray were cursed
by the tongues of Dāwūd and °Isā, son of Maryam.

That is because they rebelled [against Allāh]
and transgressed the bounds [set by Allāh].

They did not stop one another from the evil which they were doing.
And truly what they used to do was vile.

(Sūratu-l-Māā°idah 5:78-79)

Verily, I heard the Prophet ﷺ say,

“If the people see a wrongdoer and they do not take him by his hands, soon Allāh will inflict them all with a punishment from Him.” [at-Tirmidhī, °Abu Dāwūd, ibn Mājah and Aḥmad]

From reading all of this we would conclude then that what we see going on at present, where the people have risen up and peacefully resisted the corrupt despotic oppressive rulers (*dḥālīmūn*), that they are entirely within their right to do so. Certainly there is no doubt that the rulers, everywhere, are corrupt, despotic and oppressors and certainly there is no doubt that this has always been so and certainly there is no doubt it will continue to be so moreover...

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It is forbidden to every Muslim to accept the status quo or to allow oneself to support the oppressors in any way, which is part of *at-ta'āwuni 'ala-l-ithmi wa-l-'udwān* (aiding one another in sin and transgression against others) which Allāh ﷻ forbade in the Qur'an. The Prophet ﷺ said about the days when Muslims face oppressive leaders: *"Satakūnu^calaykum umarā^cun ta^crifūna minhum wa tun-kirūn. Fa man 'ankara [bi-lisānihi] faqad bari^ca wa man kariha [bi qalbihi] faqad salima wa lākin man radhiya wa tāba^c..."*

"There will be over you rulers in whom you will see some good and some evil. Whoever refutes them [with his tongue] has achieved innocence. Whoever hates them [with his heart] has survived, but as for the one who accepts and goes along...! (Muslim, at-Tirmidhī, 'Abu Dāwūd) and he stopped there and did not finish his words.

Abu Hurairah narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said,

"There will be trials and tribulations wherein the one sitting is better than the one standing. The one standing will be better than the one walking. The one walking will be better than the one running. Whoever will expose himself to these afflictions, they will destroy him. So whoever can find a place or protection or refuge from them should take shelter in it." [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

Hudhaifah ibn al-Yamān said "The people used to ask the Prophet ﷺ about the good things while I would ask him about evil out of fear that it might reach me. I said, 'O Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, we were in ignorance and evil and Allāh ﷻ came with this good. Will there be any evil after this good?' He said, 'Yes.' I said, 'Will there be any good after that evil?' He replied, 'Yes, but it will contain some smoke [that is, it will be polluted and not completely pure].' I said, 'What will be its smoke?' He said, 'A people who will guide but not by my guidance, You will recognize some things from them [as correct] and you will reject others.' I said, 'Will there be any evil after that good?' He replied, 'Yes, [there will be] callers to the gates of Hell, Whoever responds to them will be flung into it.' I said, 'Oh Prophet ﷺ describe them to us.' He said, 'They are of our skin and they speak our language.' I said, 'What do you order me to do if I should encounter them?' He said, 'Stick to the community of the Muslims and their 'Imām [leader].' I said, 'Suppose there is no such community or 'Imām?'

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“He said, ‘Withdraw from all of those sects, even if you have to chew on the roots of trees until death comes upon you while you are in that state.’” (al-Bukhārī, Muslim, °Abu Dāwūd)

قَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ ۖ
فَإِنْ أَنتَهُوا فَلَا عُدْوَانَ إِلَّا عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ

qātilūhum hatta lā takūna fitnatun wa yakūna-l-d-dīnu-li-llāh
fa-°ini °iñtahaw fa-lā °udwāna illā °ala-ḡh-ḡḡhalimīn

Fight them until there is no more fitna and the dīn belongs to Allāh.
If they cease, there should be no enmity towards any but the *unjust*.
(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:193)

وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ

wa-l-fitnatu °ashaddu mina-l-qatāl
and fitna is worse than fighting
(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:191)

We find that this view of resisting evil with one’s hands or with one’s mouth or, at least, in one’s heart and actively confronting despots and oppressors on an individual and communal level changed greatly after Ibn Taymiyya and others holding to his way of thought became more influential within the Muslim community, especially given his declaration, “Sixty years with an unjust ruler are preferable to one night with an ineffective one.”

In fact I was recently sitting with a young graduate of al-Azhar from faculty of °uṣūlu-d-dīn talking about recent events in Egypt who mentioned the above and said he agreed totally with Ibn Taymiyyah.

Take the following ḥadīth, “If the people see a wrongdoer and they do not take him by his hands, soon Allāh will inflict them all with a punishment from Him.” [at-Tirmidhī, °Abu Dāwūd, °ibn Mājah and Aḥmad], or, “Whoever struggled against them [the despots and oppressors] with his hand is a believer. Whoever struggled against them with his tongue is a believer. And whoever struggled against them with his heart is a believer. Beyond that there is no faith, even equivalent to the amount of a mustard seed... [Muslim]” The young °alim believed this ḥadīth was superceded by the juridical implications and ramifications famously expressed in the following °āyat:

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يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ ط

yā āyḥa-l-ladhīna ʾamanū ʾaṭīʿu-llāha wa ʾaṭīʿu -r-rasūla
wa ʾūli-l-ʾamri minkum

Oh you who believe! Obey Allāh and obey the Messenger,
and those from among you who are invested with authority!

(Sūrah an-Nisāa 4:59)

However, the crucial words here are, “and those from among you who are invested with authority.” which was consensually, in the Sunnī world, understood after the demise of the *Khulafāʾi Rashidūn* to be any king, ruler, or *khalīfah* (خليفة) who happened to be in power.

But what if the king, ruler, or *khalīfah* or the one who happened to be in power was a despot and an oppressor? What recourse did the people who were oppressed have against such figures – and in truth these figures were – and still are – numerous. Consider this ʾāyat:

أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتَلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظَلِمُوا ؕ

ʾudhina li-l-ladhīna yuqātalūna bi-ʾannahum ḍḥulimū

Permission to fight back is granted to those being attacked.

For they have been oppressed!

(Sūrah al-Hajj 22:39)



What exactly is oppression or what is called *ḍḥulm* (ظلم) in Arabic?

The English dictionary defines oppression as “prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or control, and gives an example of its use in a sentence, ‘Gaza is a region shattered by oppression, occupation and killing’. It also notes that oppression may mean:

- the state of being subject to such treatment or control.

and also mentions mental pressure or distress as being forms of oppression and then shows it use in another sentence: “The young people in this country have known nothing but oppression.” it gives a list of synonyms: persecution, abuse, maltreatment, ill-treatment, tyranny, despotism repression, suppression, subjection, subjugation; cruelty, brutality, injustice, hardship, suffering, misery.

In the Wikipedia we find...“Oppression is the exercise of authority or power in a burdensome, cruel, or unjust manner.”

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It can also be defined as an act or instance of oppressing, the state of being oppressed, and the feeling of being heavily burdened, mentally or physically, by troubles, adverse conditions, and anxiety.

The lyrics in a rock song of a previous generation summon people saying, “Hey people take a good look at what’s goin’ down. Take a good look at what’s goin’ round.”

So let’s look at recent events in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Bahrain, Syria and try to understand what’s, “goin down.” during the first six months of 2011/1432 and the rising up of the people, a great many of whom are from the *shabāb* or the youth, who are in open revolt precisely against those corrupt oppressors (*dhālamīn* / ظالمين) invested with authority (*ʿūli-l-ʿamr* / أولي الأمر) over them such as Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunis, Hosni Mubārak of Miṣr, ʿAī ʿAbdullāh Ṣaleḥ of the Yemen, Col. Ghadafi of Libya, the Āl-Khalifa family of Bahrain, Sultan Qabūs of Oman, Bashār Ḥafīdh al-ʿAssad, Ahmadinejad of Iran and the various other tyrants, despots, autocrats, dictators, subjugators and tormentors.

But from the point of view of ibn Taymiyyah and his school such revolt is contrary to what Allāh ﷻ has revealed in Qurʾān because, “the prohibition of revolution is based upon the prevention of greater evil and corruption in the land and the prevention of greater harm to the Muslims in general that almost invariably arises from such revolts. As for even when clear, manifest disbelief is observed from the one in authority, then this in and of itself does not warrant revolt and rebellion and fighting without exception.”

Indeed, Ibn Taymiyyah in his book *Khurūj against the Rulers* states, “The prohibition of revolting is based upon the prevention of greater evil and corruption in the land and the prevention of greater harm to the Muslims in general that almost invariably arises from such revolts. As for when clear, manifest disbelief is observed from the one in authority, then this in and of itself does not warrant revolt and rebellion and fighting *without exception*.”

What does ‘*without exception*’ mean when the Prophet ﷺ said, “A true Muslim is one from [the crimes of] whose tongue and hands, all other Muslims are safe; and a true Muʾmin is one from whom people’s lives and wealth are secured; and a true Mujahid is one, who subdues his inner self and forces it into obedience to Allāh ﷻ.”

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The Prophet ﷺ also said “By the One, Who controls my life in His hand, no such person shall enter Paradise, whose neighbor was not safe from his transgressions.” Bukhārī (narrative no. 10, 11 and 6119), Muslim (narrative no. 40, 41 and 42), at-Tirmidhī. (narrative no. 2504, 2627 and 2628)

The death toll since the beginning of fighting in Libya, according to Human Rights Watchgroup could be as high as 15,000 or more.

More Afghans are dying in their country's bloody insurgency than at any time since 2001, a new UN report says, thanks largely to the Ṭālibān's (طالبان) use of indiscriminate roadside bombs and suicide attackers. The findings released yesterday came as at least six civilians were shot dead in Helmand and a series of bomb attacks around the country killed or wounded bystanders.

According to the UN, at least 2,412 civilians were killed last year and a further 3,566 wounded by Ṭālibān-led insurgents. This could, however, be a fraction of the true total: human rights advocates say many families caught up in the insurgency live in areas too dangerous for researchers to collect information on casualties.

In Yemen, in order to suppress the peaceful uprisings incited by the people's frustration with the government, President Ṣaleḥ has sent out riot police to use brutality and tear gas on anyone in opposition. In the city of Taiz alone, 15 people were killed and 30 more were injured yesterday after police discovered them trying to breach a government building. Similarly, “following a 2:00 a.m. protest in the nearby city of Hudaida, police attacked protesters heading to the presidential palace. Consequently, three people were struck by bullets, 30 were stabbed by knives, and 270 others were harmed from the inhalation of tear gas.”

Or this news report: “Manama, Bahrain; Saudi soldiers fired live rounds on thousands of marching protesters in this Gulf emirate. Tanks have been used to fire on and destroy more than 20 mosques.

“The security forces from Saudi Arabia are even attacking doctors in hospitals, nurses in the streets and a military officer has seized control of a hospital in the Bahrain capital. The forces have used tanks and helicopters to force protesters off the streets which is not only shocking but illegal. Amnesty International is requesting the US and other countries to stop selling arms to the Saudi and Bahrain governments being used against anti-government protesters.”

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“The role of the US government in providing arms to Middle East dictators or royals is unconscionable, as is the use of the weapons on their own people by the royals. The US is complicit in being a provider of military arms against peaceful protests which has stained their reputation in the eyes of the people. The rubber bullets, tear gas, tanks and live ammunition now being used against citizens of Bahrain (and Gaza) are all marked ‘made in the USA.’”

The key phrase in the last news item and what is common to all of these reports is that it is Muslims who are killing, maiming, terrorizing, beating, shooting, raping etc. other Muslims despite the Prophet ﷺ saying “A true Muslim is one from [the transgressions of] whose tongue¹ and hands, all other Muslims are safe;

Some years ago in 1992 there was a huge outcry against the destruction in India of the Babri masjid in Ayodhya, a city in Uttar Pradesh. It was destroyed when a political rally developed into a riot involving 150,000 people organized by the Hindu fundamentalist Bharatiya Janata Party and allied organizations. Muslims were up in arms and there was wide spread disturbances and rioting as a result.

What does it mean then, when we read that a few weeks back in Peshawar, Pakistan (a ‘Muslim’ country) ten worshippers, including a child, were killed and 30 others injured when a powerful bomb blast totally destroyed a mosque in Nowshera in northwest Pakistan.

The explosion targeted the mosque inside Akhun Punjo Baba Shrine (*mazār/مزار*) in Akbarpura area of Nowshera, about 15 km from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa capital Peshawar.

Scores of people were offering Friday prayers at the masjid while hundreds had gathered to take food from a ‘langar’ or community kitchen.

The Ṭalibān (all of whom profess to being ‘Muslim’) have claimed responsibility for this and several recent attacks on masājid in cities across Pakistan, including Lahore and Karachi.

In Jamrud, a Pakistani suicide bomber blew himself up during Friday prayers at a packed masjid leaving around 50 dead and scores wounded in one of the bloodiest recent attacks in the nation.

This quote from a report by Fida Muḥammad Bangash, a senior administration official in the Khyber Agency: “Blood-soaked caps, shoes and shirts lay around the flattened mosque, where dazed survivors looked on as rescue workers dug bodies out of the rubble.”

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Here is another item from Jakarta in Indonesia (another ‘Muslim’ country) from *Asia News*: “A suicide bomber blew himself up today at Taka mosque in Ciberon (West Java) a town about 300 km from Jakarta. The toll is about 28 wounded, including several policemen. The suicide bombing took place shortly before the Friday prayers, while the faithful were gathering inside the building.

According to authorities the attack was organized by a group of Salafi Islamic terrorists in revenge for the recent operations carried out by the Indonesian police (who are all of course also ‘Muslim’).

As one contemporary Muslim scholar wrote, “Zealots are a plague upon religion. Extremists come in two types. The first is a reactionary extremist who falls far right of a center-point. Reactionary extremists do not want any pluralism; they view the world in melodramatic, black and white, good and evil terms. They are good and anyone who opposes them is evil. From among the Muslims these are people who ‘excommunicate’ any Muslim who fails to share their interpretations of the Qur’ān or, what they imagine to be, the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ. They use *takfir* [denouncing a Muslim as an unbeliever] and character assassination as a tool for marginalizing any criticism directed at them. In turn they are used by the Western media in order to scare people and cause them to believe that Muslims are insane. Unfortunately, our communities provide them with much fuel to fire their incendiary flames.”

“‘Islām has been hijacked by a discourse of anger and by the rhetoric of rage. We have allowed for too long our mimbars to become platforms for people who are often recognizable psychopaths who use anger – a very powerful emotion – to fire Muslims up, only to leave them feeling bitter and spiteful towards people who in the most part, given the level of the populist media, are completely unaware of the true conditions that prevail.”

The Prophet ﷺ said: “There will come a time for my people when there will remain nothing of ‘Islām except its name and those who call themselves by this name will be the furthest from it, and of the Qur’ān nothing will remain except its outward form. The masājīd will be full of people but they will be empty of right guidance. The religious leaders (*fuqahā* / فقهاء) of that day will be the most evil religious leaders under the heavens; sedition and dissension (*fitnah*) will go out from them and return to them.” (ibn Babuya)

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If we do not want to be classified among those who call themselves Muslims but are the furthest from it, we must find our way back to the middle path that Allāh ﷻ has described and that the Prophet ﷺ has manifested by actively being the mercy to all of creation. Then we will be truly both the followers of the Prophet ﷺ and we will be those who act on the real teachings of Allāh ﷻ in the Qurʾān.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِعَالًا سَتَمُنْهُمُ فِي شَيْءٍ
إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ

°inna-l-ladḥīna farraqū dīnahum wa kānū shīya°an
lasta minhum fī shay°in °innama °amruhum °ila-llahi
thumma yunabbi°hum bimā kānū yaf°alūn

As for those who split up their religion and became sects,
you will not have anything to do with them.

Their matter rests only with Allah;
then He will inform them concerning what they used to do.
(Sūrah al-°An°ām 6.159)

When we try to understand the source of this rage that leads to Muslims killing other Muslims; leads to Muslims *takfiring* other Muslims, refusing to pray behind this °imām or that °imam; what we find is arrogant intolerance based on the belief that each sect hold that they alone are the one sect of the 73 sects at the end of time that will enter the Garden and everyone else is dammed.

And everywhere you look it is this sect versus that sect – Sunni vs. Shī°ah, Wahhabis vs. Ahlu-s-Sunnah wa Jama°ah, Deobandis vs Barelwis, Salafis vs Šūfis, Ikḥwan Muslimūnis vs. Secularists, Jama°at Tablighis vs ISNA°s, ICNA°s and the Triple I T°ers, and all of them are at war with one another, calling each other apostates, blowing themselves up at Friday prayers, killing each other and even raping Muslim women while all the time protesting the vicious Crusader forces when in truth more Muslims are being killed by other Muslims than Muslims are being killed by the Crusader forces, which is not to say the Crusaders are not busy killing Muslims across the world. As Bob Marley put it, “Everywhere is war.”

And the Signs of the Hour are now everywhere to be seen. According to the narration of Abu Huraira ؓ (Šāḥīḥ Bukharī, *Afflictions and the End of the World*, Volume 9, Book 88,) some of these are:

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“The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘The Hour will not be established (1) till two big groups fight each other whereupon there will be a great number of casualties on both sides and they will be following one and the same religious doctrine, (2) till about thirty Dajjals (liars) appear, and each one of them will claim that he is the Prophet of Allāh ﷻ, (3) till the religious knowledge is taken away (by the death of religious scholars) (4) earthquakes will increase in number (5) time will pass quickly, (6) afflictions will appear, (7) killing, (i.e., *al-Harj*) will increase, (8) till wealth will be in abundance—so abundant that a wealthy person will worry lest nobody should accept his Zakāt, and whenever he will present it to someone, that person (to whom it will be offered) will say, ‘I am not in need of it.’ (9) till the desert dwellers compete with one another in constructing high buildings, (10) till a man when passing by a grave of someone will say, ‘Would that I were in his place (11) and till the sun rises from the West. So when the sun will rise and the people will see it (rising from the West) they will all believe (embrace ʾIslām) but that will be the time when: “The Prophet ﷺ said, ”The Hour will not come until the sun rises from the West. When the people see it, whoever is living on earth will believe, but that will be the time when it will do no good to a soul to believe in if it had not believed before.”’ (Bukhārī)

“And the Hour will not be established until two men spreading a garment in front of them will not be able to sell it, nor fold it up; and the Hour will not be established until a man who has milked his she-camel and has taken away the milk will not be able to drink it; and the Hour will not be established before a man repairing a trough (for his livestock) is unable to water (his animals) in it; and the Hour will not be established until a person has raised a morsel (of food) to his mouth but will not be able to eat it.”

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ رَبُّكَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ
بَوْمَ يَأْتِيَ بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ لَا يَنْفَعُ نَفْسًا إِيْمَانُهَا
لَمْ تَكُنْ آمَنَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ أَوْ كَسَبَتْ فِي إِيمَانِهَا خَيْرًا قُلِ انظُرُوا إِنَّا مُنظِرُونَ

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hal yandhurūna ʾilla an taʾtiyahumu-l-malaʾikatu
ʾaw yaʾtiya rabbuka ʾaw yaʾtiya baʿdu ʾāyāti rabbika
yawma yaʾtī baʿdu ʾāyāti rabbika lā yanfaʿu nafsan ʾīmanuhā
lam takun ʾāmanat min qabālu ʾaw kasabat fī ʾīmāniha khayran
quli-n-taḍḥirū ʾinn muntaḍḥirūn

What are they waiting for but for the angels to come to them
or for your Lord Himself to come,
or for one of your Lord’s Signs to come?

On the day that one of your Lord’s Signs does come,
no ʾimān which a self professes will be of any use to it
if it did not have ʾimān before and earn good in its ʾiman¹.

Say: ‘Wait! We too are waiting.’

(Sūrah al-ʾAnʿām 6.158)

As we can see many of these Signs of the Hour are now quite clear even if some of the Signs have not yet been established but this school of thought says it has nothing to with the Hour and that such tribulations, many of which appear to stem from oppressive rulers, are actually from Allāh ﷻ and should be met with “humility and submission” and “taqwa, supplication, remorse and abstention from sin” rather than resisting and rising up against the forces of oppression (*ḍḥulm/ظلم*) and the oppressors (*aḍḥ-ḍḥālmīn/الظالمين*).

What such thought has led to is something commonly seen on TV in Muslim countries at the time of the two ʿEids, where the despotic ruler, who after all, is a ‘Muslim’, has kept the *masājīd* open, established the call to *ṣalāt* and maintained religious schools and institutions, etc.) is flanked, on one side by the head of the compliant court ʿulemā and by the chief mufti on his other side. Such a sight is seen twice a year in almost every Muslim country from Senegal to Indonesia and all those in between – because it is by such actions as keeping the *masājīd* open, the call to prayer public, etc. that the bona-fides of the despot (*ḍḥālim/ظالم*) as a member of *ulu-l-ʿamr* are supposedly established, and change is forever pre-empted no matter how the people suffer at the hands of said oppressors.

1. And ʾimān is defined by the Prophet ﷺ who said. “*lā yuʾmin bi-llāh hatta yuḥibbā li-ʾakḥihi mā yuḥibbā li-nafsi*. “No one is a believer (has ʾimān) until he loves for his brother what he loves for him self.” (Bukḥārī, Muslim)

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Obviously this view has now been called into question in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Jordan, Syria etc. So what should we think of these mainly young Muslims who have openly set aside five hundred years of juridical opinion and taken matters into their own hands and sought, mainly by peaceful means, to depose the oppressors and despots? Have they strayed from ʾIslām? Are they heretics or apostates? Or are they the sincere ones (*al-mukhlisīn*) who have acted in accord with what ʾAbū Saīd al-Khudrī narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever of you sees an evil must then change it with his hand. If he is not able to do so, then [he must change it] with his tongue. And if he is not able to do so, then [he must change it] with his heart. And that is the slightest [effect of] faith.” (at-Tirmidhī, Abu Dāwūd, al-Nasāʾī, and Muslim)

For my own part I am of the opinion that the answer to this question lies in understanding what is really meant by “those who are in authority” (ʾūli-l-ʾamr), because until the meaning of ʾūli-l-ʾamr is clearly understood the whole equation is questionable even though the Wahhibīn, Salafīn and some Berelewis take the position that a despotic ruler, given he fulfills the certain pre-requisites, is to be obeyed in all cases even to the point where I have heard people of Dr Naik’s persuasion take the position that when al-Ḥusayn رضي الله عنه discovered that Yazīd had established his authority as the *amiru-l-muʾminīn*, al-Ḥusayn رضي الله عنه should have agreed to accept him as *khalīfa*.

As a Muslim who professes Ṣūfism I find it increasingly difficult to indentify with any of these modern day schools as, for the most part, they all seem to have strayed very far from the noble ideals of the Prophet ﷺ and those who directly succeeded him.

From a Ṣūfī perspective the ʾūli-l-ʾamr clearly are our shuyukh رضي الله عنه.

When Sūrah an-Nisāʾ 4:59 was revealed, Jābir bin ʾAbdullāh al-Anṣari رضي الله عنه, asked the Prophet ﷺ who these ʾūli-l-ʾamr were. and the Prophet ﷺ replied that the ʾūli-l-ʾamr were his “successors”.

Now the word ‘successor’ also has a lot of baggage that comes with it both from the Sunnī and the Shīʿah position but from the Ṣūfī perspective it is not at ambiguous. It means those people who have the characteristics and behavior of the Prophet ﷺ and actively manifest it at all times in their daily lives and have a *direct* initiatic connection.

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°Ali ؑ reported: “The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: ‘I am the city of knowledge and °Ali is its gate.’ [at-Tirmidhī and al-Ḥākim] In another narration on the authority of °Ali ؑ, the Prophet ﷺ said: “I am the house of wisdom and °Alī ؑ is its door.” [at-Tirmidhī] Also al-Bazzar, and aṭ-Ṭabarānī in his *al-ʿAwsat*, on the authority of Jābir bin °Abdullāh, al-Ḥākim and al-°Uqayli in his *al-Duʿafa*, as well as Ibn °Adi on the authority of Ibn ʿUmar, said ‘Alī ؑ reported: “The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘I am the city of knowledge and °Alī ؑ is its gate.’”

انا مدينة العلم وعلي بابها

[at-Tirmidhī and al-Ḥākim].

Yet another ḥadīth on the same subject reads,

انا مدينة العلم وعلي بابها. لا أحد يدخل البيت إلا من خلال البوابة.

“I am the city of knowledge, and °Alī is its door.

And in the light of those °aḥadīth consider the following °āyat:

وَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ أَبْوَابِهَا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

waʿtu-l-buyūta min ʿabāwābiha wa ʿttaqu-llāha laʿallakum tuflihūn

So enter houses by their doors

and be aware of Allāh, so that hopefully you will be successful.

(Suratu-l-Baqarah 2:189)

All of the *tūruq*, with one exception, trace their lineage directly back to the Prophet ﷺ through °Alī ؑ. When we say ‘lineage’ we mean there is a *direct* initiatic connection in an unbroken line from our living and physically present shaykh ؑ to the Prophet ﷺ through °Alī ؑ. So clearly it is our shuyukh who are the direct successors to the Prophet ﷺ and they alone who have authority over us.


In many of the ṣūfī silāsil or lines of connection to the Prophet ﷺ one naturally finds many of what today, almost euphemistically, are called our pious ancestors (*as-salaf*/السلف), who were among the true successors of the Prophet ﷺ, as well as the names of Shīʿah °Imāms ؑ who also were truly his successors. And this in no way is contradictory nor is it problematic nor does it a cause of consternation.


As Ṣūfis we are able to understand both the Sunnī (and even some of the post ibn Taymiyya Sunnīs) and the Shīʿa perspectives, even though they may differ because we know the Prophet ﷺ said, “The differences in my community are a blessing.” (al-Maqdasī).

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For Şūfīs the question of who is the worldly ruler is, in a sense, beside the point. Obedience or disobedience is cognate with traffic lights, speed limits or the warnings on electrical devices or food packages. What you do or don't do is at your own risk and that is determined by both experience and clear and obvious danger. One must be aware of where one is and what the rules are.

In one country not obeying the *dhālim* or ruler (take your choice) may result in detention or death whilst in another, one may be able to get by with quite a lot (for a while). It all depends.

These are the ones, which is to say the authentic living *mashayukh*, who truly have authority over us, but as for worldly rulers... well...it all depends. They are a natural phenomena and like storms, earthquakes, lightening, floods etc. they have to be taken into consideration if we are to stay alive but...for us that is all they are. We do not look to them for any real authority, by which we mean, spiritual authority, because for the most part, since the time of °Alī , very few of them have had any form of spiritual authority. We also understand, because we have often witnessed it historically, that revolution frequently results in greater harm to the Muslims in general than to the rulers because it is the nature of rulers to be corrupt, despotic, cruel and tyrannical. In short we don't look to these people for anything in the realm of spiritual or religious authority. As the saying goes, "let the dogs bark and just hope they don't bite."

As for the sincere young people who have showed their courage in standing up against the despots, our view is that "There is no prophet that was sent to a nation before me  except that he had helpers and companions. They would follow his way and implement his orders. After them came generations that would say what they did not do and do what they did not say. *Whoever* struggled against them with his hand is a believer. *Whoever* struggled against them with his tongue is a believer. And *whoever* struggled against them with his heart is a believer. Beyond that there is no faith, even equivalent to the amount of a mustard seed..." (Muslim)

Here I would like to quote three °āyāt, the application of which, I believe, offers a real way out of the intolerable situation in which we find ourselves as Muslims in this time when the Signs are all around us and it is difficult to know how to proceed.

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وَإِذَا جَاءَكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ
كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ

wa °idhā jā°aka-l-ladhīna yu°minūna bi-āyātina
fa-qul salāmun °alaykum
kataba rabbukum °ala nafsihī-r-raḥmah

And when those who believe in Our revelations come to you,

Say: Peace be unto you!

Your Lord has written Mercy on His Self.

(Sūratu-l-°An°ām 6:54)



وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

wa māā °arsalnākāā °illā-raḥmatal-li-l-°ālamīn

And We have not sent you except as a Mercy for all the worlds.

(Sūratu-l-°Ambiyā° 21:107)



وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِّتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ
وَيَكُونَ الرُّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا

wa kadḥalika ja°alnakum °ummatan wasaṭan
li-takūnū shuhadāā°a °ala-n-nāsi
wa yakūna-r-rasūlu °alaykum shahidā

Thus We have appointed you a middle nation,
that you might be witnesses over mankind,
and that the messenger may be a witness over you.

(Sūrau-l-Baqarah 2:143)



What I find compelling about these three °āyāt, and why I say that it seems they may show a real way out of the intolerable situation in which we find ourselves as Muslims in this time, is that in these three °āyāt are found very important principles for a way forward.

The first is that Allāh ﷻ has prescribed or ‘written’ Mercy upon His own being, and the second is that Allāh ﷻ has sent the Prophet ﷺ specifically as a Mercy to the entire creation.

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In the first place it brings us to understand that the principle underlying the entire creation is Mercy. The proof of this is that the Creator ﷻ has prescribed that Mercy (*rahmah*/رحمة) for Himself.

Having made clear to us that He Himself ﷻ, in essence, *is* that Mercy, He then clarifies for us that He has sent from Himself ﷻ His Emisary, His Herald, His Message Bearer ﷺ to the entirety of creation, (*al-‘alāmīn*/الْعَالَمِينَ), in the form of a human being to be that Mercy to all He ﷻ has created.

From this we can understand that Mercy or *Rahmah* is both the very foundation of all of the Creation and Muḥammad ﷺ is the active principle appointed by the Creator as a mercy for *all* of the creation.

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

wa ‘innaka la‘ala khuluqin ‘aḍḥīm

And truly, you (o Muḥammad),
are [created] on an exalted [standard of] character.

(Suratu-l-Qalam 68:4)

Now when we look at the ‘āyāt we see that Allāh ﷻ does not say, “We have sent you as a Mercy to the Muslims, much less Malikis or Hanafis or Shāfi‘is or Hanbalis or Shī‘is or Ṣūfīs or Salafis or Wahhabis or Tablighis or ‘Ikḥwanis or men or women etc, but as Mercy to the entirety of Creation which, presumably, includes Jews, Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Taoists, Secularists, Modernists and even Atheists etc. or, for that matter, every human being.

There is an ḥadīth that tells how the Prophet ﷺ even had mercy on a tree trunk, “We were ordered to have mercy upon those who are on earth. ‘Who’ here denotes man, animal and inanimate objects as well. The Prophet ﷺ even had mercy on inanimate objects. He ﷺ used to deliver the khutbah leaning on a trunk, but he left it for a wooden pulpit made for him.

“The companions in the mosque heard the trunk moaning because the Messenger ﷺ had left it. He ﷺ stopped the sermon, descended from the pulpit (*minbar*/منبر), and embraced the trunk to his noble chest until it stopped moaning. The Prophet ﷺ confided some words to the trunk until it stopped moaning, then he had it buried under the *minbar*. The companions asked, ‘O Messenger of Allāh, we saw you talking to the tree trunk, what did you tell it?’

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“He ﷺ replied, ‘I told it: “Wouldn’t you love to be with me in paradise”? So it stopped.’ By moaning the tree trunk showed that it longed for the Prophet ﷺ. He ﷺ in turn had mercy on that tree trunk by descending from the *mimbar* and embracing it.”

He ﷺ said, “The All-Merciful ﷻ has mercy on those who are merciful. Have mercy on those who are on earth so that Allāh ﷻ will have mercy on you.”

قَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ
لِمَن كَانَ مِنْكُمْ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

qadā kāna lakum fi rasūli-llāhi ʾuswatun ḥasanatun
li-mān kāna yarju-llāha wa-l-yawma-l-ʾākḥira
wa dhakara-llāha kathīrā

You have an excellent model in the Messenger of Allāh,
for all who put their hope in Allāh and the Last Day
and remember Allāh much.

(Sūratu-l-Aḥzab 33:21)

Standing against the flood of evil and iniquity – insisting on the primary message of the Prophet ﷺ of ‘*Mercy to all and malice toward none*’ are the ʾawliya karam and the shuyūkh, murshids and pirs of the many turūq, tāʾifah (طائفة) and schools of taṣawwuf (تصوف).

These are our lights in what is an increasingly dark age.

The blessed strangers are those who find their way against the flood of evil and iniquity to the safety of their teachings and guidance.

The zāwiyah, ribāt or tekke and the circles within them that the teachers of Mercy establish are the lifeboats that take the strangers lost in the oceans of evil and *fitnah* to the shores of Mercy.

Those who seek Mercy in the present age should know they will seldom find that Mercy in the madrassahs or colleat ash-shariʿah.

If you want to find Mercy and the Teachings of Mercy you must seek out the Teachers of that Mercy and, in Truth, they are none other than the ʾawliyaʾ karam and the shuyūkh, murshids and pirs we have mentioned.

These are the real ʾūli-l-ʾamr, those really in authority, and these are truly the people of the middle way; the people of heart who show way forward beyond the murderers, hijackers, takfiris etc.

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كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ ط

kataba rabbukum °alā nafsihi-r-raḥmah
Your Lord has written Mercy on His Self.
(Sūratu-l-°An°ām 6:54)

“I was not sent to call down curses on people, but as a Mercy. I am Muḥammad, who Praises Allāh ﷺ, and Aḥmad, who is praised by Allāh ﷻ, and I am Ḥaṣṣr, the last Prophet in whose presence the people will gather. I am the Prophet of Repentance and the Prophet for whose sake the door of repentance will always remain open. I am the Prophet of Mercy who says, ‘The Most Merciful shows mercy to those who have mercy on others. Show mercy to those on earth, and the One beyond the heavens will show mercy to you.’”

Oh Allāh, the bodies of the lovers are humbled in their prostration and their hands are raised seeking even more from You. You have let them taste the sweetness of direct understanding and unveiling (*tajaliyyāt*/التجليات) and by that understanding their lives are immersed in goodness. You have made the bliss continue and opened the door of Your Gardens to them. You have allowed their hearts to visit Your Dominions. The love of all those who love is related to You and You Alone are the Cause of the yearning of all those still yearning. The hearts of the knowers (*al-°arifīn*) have melted for you and the hearts of the truthful ones (*aṣ-ṣiddiqīn*) and the sincere ones (*al-mukhlīṣīn*) have intimacy (*°uns*) with You. This is the true way.

وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الْوَدُودُ • ذُو الْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيدُ

wa huwa-l-ghafūru-l-wadūd – dhu-l-°arshi-l-majīd
He is the Ever-Forgiving, the All-Loving,
Lord of the Throne of Glory
(Sūratu-l-Burūj 86:14-15)

And what is that Throne but the heart of the believer? In accord with the well-known Ḥadīth Qudsī, “Nothing contains My Glory, My Lights, My Manifestations except the heart of the believer, for nothing can contain Me but the heart of the believer.”

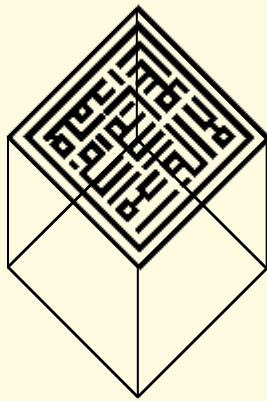
وَقَلْبَ الْمُؤْمِنِ بَيْتُ الرَّبِّ

wa qalba-l-mumin baytu-r-rabb
And the heart of the believer is the house of Allāh.

°Abū Ḍarda ؓ narrates the the Prophet ﷺ said,

“Truly Allāh ﷻ says,
‘I am Allāh besides Whom there is no deity. but Me.
I am the King of kings.
The hearts of kings are in My Hand.
When people obey Me,
I open the hearts of the kings toward them with Mercy and Love.
When people disobey me,
I turn the hearts of the kings towards wrath and tyranny.
Then they (the rulers) inflict terrible tyranny upon them.
So do not (waste your time) cursing the rulers.
Rather, involve yours selves with dhikr and humility
so that I may protect you against (the tyranny) of your rulers.’”

Mu'jam al-Awsat of at-Tabaranī



noon hierographers
green mountain
virginia
usa